BRITISH COLUMBIA

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Market

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage points to 9.4% in June**. The drop in the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was due to a decline of 7,000 in the labour force in addition to 1,000 fewer people employed. At a national level the unemployment remained unchanged at 8.4% despite a decrease of 41,000 in the labour force and 36,000 in employed workers.

  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Across British Columbia, the unemployment rate was the lowest in Northeast (3.1%) followed by Thompson-Okanagan (7.5%).** The rate in the Northeast region has declined steadily for the last two years as the oil and gas industry expanded. Vancouver and Victoria metropolitan areas had 0.3 and 0.6 percentage point declines, bringing their unemployment rates (three-month moving average) to 9.0% and 8.7% respectively.

  Source: Statistics Canada

- **The labour income of British Columbians increased by 0.2% in April (seasonally adjusted).** The increase was below the average national growth of 0.5% in April. Above average growth in labour income was registered in Newfoundland (+1.1%), Quebec (+1.1%), Nova Scotia (+0.9%) and Ontario (+0.6%), while Alberta (-0.4%) and the north showed declines. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's help-wanted index—a measure of the number of help-wanted ads in BC newspapers—rose by two points between May and June, to 122 (1996=100).** Nova Scotia was the only other province to post a similar gain in June. For the country as a whole, the index was unchanged with PEI, Newfoundland and Alberta showing decreases. *Source: SC, The Daily*

Housing

- **New home construction activity in British Columbia increased in June**. Housing starts (seasonally adjusted at annual rates) rose 16.7% from the previous month to 24,500. On a national level, urban starts slipped 4.6% to 132,700 units. A labour dispute in the Toronto construction industry contributed to the overall declines in Canada.

  Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing

- **The cost of new housing was unchanged in Vancouver and declined by 1.5% in Victoria between April and May.** Survey respondents in Victoria reported poor market conditions as the main reason for the decline. New housing prices in Vancouver were 5.7% below the May 1997 level and Victoria prices were 5.6% lower than a year ago. *Source: SC, The Daily*

- **On average, Canadians paid $11,993 for their homes in 1956**. Forty-one years later, the average house price was thirteen times higher at $156,531 (1997). During this time span, there were only six years in which declines in house prices were recorded - the early sixties (1960 and 1961), the early eight-

Report **Job Search Methods**

Did you know...?
The Economist magazine recently reported that marijuana production in BC is worth between $2 and $4 billion annually, with more than 3,000 commercial operations cultivating as many as 2,400 plants at a time.

ies (1982 and 1984) and the early nineties (1990 and 1995).

Source: Canadian Real Estate Association

- **For the sixth consecutive year, British Columbia's average residential house price was the highest in Canada.** In 1997, on average, British Columbians paid $220,512 for their homes, followed by Ontario ($164,382) and Northwest Territories ($149,628). Saskatchewan had the best buys at $83,978.

  Across British Columbia, housing prices varied considerably. The Northern Lights area had the lowest average house price at $84,811 with Greater Vancouver ($287,094), Fraser Valley ($224,549) and Victoria ($218,398) at the top end. *Source: Canadian Real Estate Association*

- **Six percent of Canadian households own vacation homes**. Another four percent of homeowners and 9% of renters stated they were planning to purchase a vacation home within the next year. The demand for vacation property will likely increase, as baby boomers reach the prime age for vacation homeownership. *Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing*

Culture

- **Roughly ten percent of the book publishers in Canada are found in British Columbia**. The forty-seven publishers in BC, had sales totaling $44.5 million in Canada and $8.4 million in foreign sales in 1996/97. In Canada, the 562 book publishers and exclusive agents reported revenues of just under $2.0 billion. Canadian–controlled publishers accounted for $1.3 billion in revenues while the foreign-controlled firms reached $690 million.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Smoking

- **The prevalence of cigarette smoking for British Columbians appears to be on the decline**. In 1991, 29% of the BC resident population (aged 12 and over) smoked cigarettes; this figure dropped to 25% in 1994 and 22% in 1997.

  The average age of initiation into a smoking lifestyle is 15.7 years. Among current smokers, 20% began before the age of 13, 44% began before the age of 15 and 83% were smokers before reaching 19 years.

  The propensity for males to smoke was slightly greater than females (23% versus 21%), but males were more likely to be former smokers than females (32% versus 27%). The greatest prevalence rate (31%) for current smokers was among the 19 to 24 age group, followed by 27% for 25 to 44 year olds.

  Source: Heart & Stroke Foundation of BC

Births

- **In 1996 46,138 babies were born to BC residents, down 1.5% from 1995.** The number of births in Canada declined 3.1% with the largest declines in Yukon (-5.7%), New Brunswick (-4.5%) and Ontario (-4.3%). The fertility rate, the average number of live births per woman aged 15 to 49, fell to 1.54 in BC from 1.60 in the previous year. Only Newfoundland (1.26), New Brunswick (1.41) and Nova Scotia (1.49) had lower fertility rates than BC, while NWT (2.71) and Saskatchewan (1.89) had the highest rates in the country.

- **BC's infant mortality rate dropped from six infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1995 to 5.1 deaths in 1996.** Decreases were also registered in most parts of the country, with the exception of Nova Scotia and PEI.

  Source: Statistics Canada

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

July 10, 1998 *Infoline Report:*

Job Search Methods of the Unemployed in BC: 1976–1997

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Originally published in May 1998 issue of *Labour Force Statistics*. Annual subscription is $60 + GST

Introduction . . . According to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, individuals aged 15+ are considered unemployed if they are not working at the time of the survey but are available for and did actively seek work sometime during the previous four weeks. The two exceptions to this general principle are to include as unemployed those who are on temporary layoff and those who have a new job to start within four weeks. All other individuals are classified either as employed or not in the labour force.

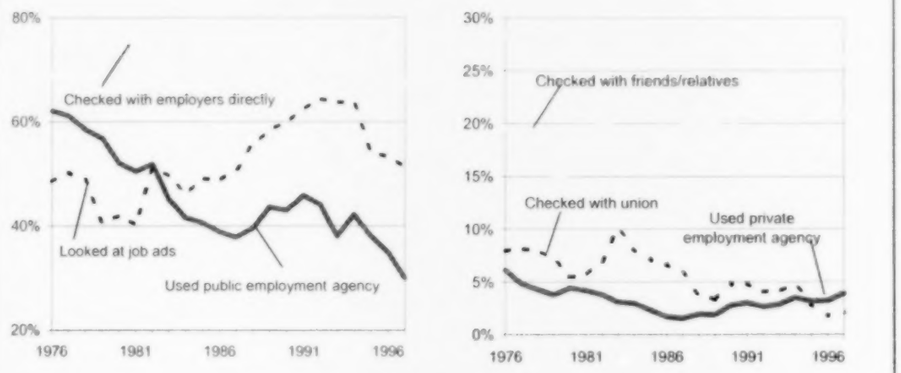
Unemployed workers engage in various job search activities, from informal methods such as talking to friends or relatives to more formal means, such as registering with employment agencies. Using information from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey this article looks at the types of job search methods used by the unemployed since 1976, highlighting differences between age groups, inter-provincial differences, and trends over time.

Main activities of the unemployed. . . Figure 1 indicates the main activities undertaken by the unemployed in B.C. from 1976 to 1997. The proportion of the unemployed looking for either full-time or part-time work has fluctuated quite substantially over the years. The highest proportion looking for full-time work occurred in 1984 at 84 per cent, which corresponded with the lowest percentage seeking part-time work at just 11 per cent.

Figure 1: Main Activities of the Unemployed
Annual Averages for B.C., 1976 to 1997

Use of public employment agencies falls . . . In B.C. since 1976, the percentage of unemployed job searchers using public employment agencies has fallen steadily. Figure 2 displays the proportion of B.C.'s unemployed population in terms of methods they used to look for work. Since 1976, there has been a decrease from 62% to 30% in the proportion of individuals using public employment agencies. There has also been a small drop in the number using private agencies. During the same period, the proportion of those checking with friends and relatives for job leads rose from 20% to 26%, with a peak of 30% in 1994. Checking with employers directly continues to be the most popular method and has remained fairly steady at around 70% since 1976. Looking at job ads is the second most frequently used method, yet the proportion has fallen from almost 65% in the early 1990s to just over 50% in 1997.

Figure 2: Job Search Methods of the Unemployed in B.C.
All Age Groups, 1976 to 1997



Differences between age groups . . . The percentage of the unemployed using the various methods was not generally uniform across different age groups. Figure 3 includes job search strategy rates for persons aged 15 to 24, persons aged 25 to 44, and persons aged 45 and over. The proportion of those checking with employers directly decreased with age, from 75 per cent in 1997 for those aged 15 to 24 to 62 per cent for those aged 45 and older. In contrast, 54 per cent of those aged 45 and over looked at job ads in 1997, compared with only 48 per cent of those aged 15 to 24. There were also differences between age groups in the use of employment agencies, both public and private. The highest proportion in 1997 still using public agencies were in the 25 to 44 age group at 34 per cent, compared with only 25 per cent of those aged 15 to 24.

Figure 3: Percentage of Unemployed Using Various Job Search Methods
Annual Average in B.C. For Selected Age Groups

	Age 15 to 24		Age 25 to 44		Age 45 +	
	1976	**1997**	**1976**	**1997**	**1976**	**1997**
Checked with employers directly	73.7	75.1	67.3	64.6	57.3	62.3
Used public employment agency	62.6	24.9	64.4	34.2	56.7	27.4
Looked at job ads	48.2	48.2	50.5	51.9	45.3	53.9
Used private employment agency	6.4	0.0	6.1	4.7	0.0	4.5
Checked with union	4.6	0.0	8.7	2.6	16.0	0.0
Checked with friends or relatives	21.9	23.8	18.1	27.0	16.0	26.5
Placed or answered ads	20.1	18.9	23.3	26.3	19.3	20.7
Used other methods	0.0	3.5	0.0	4.9	0.0	5.0

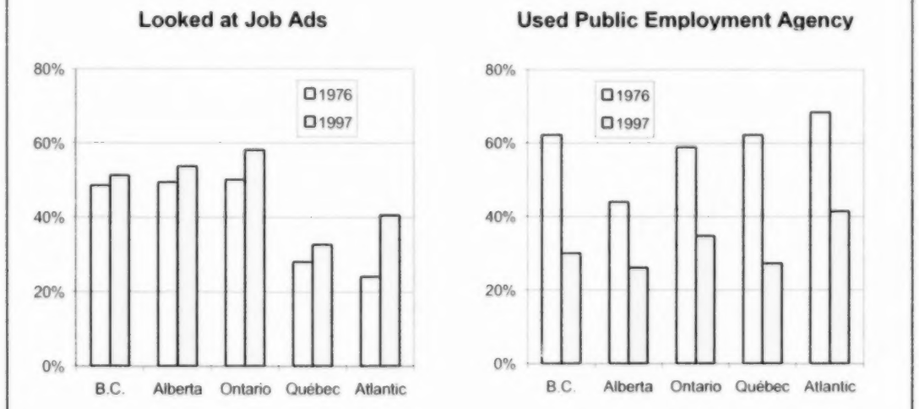
Job search by province . . . Figure 4 provides a breakdown, by selected provinces, of job search methods for 1997, including national averages. For most methods, B.C. was close to the national average. One quarter of unemployed job searchers in B.C. checked with friends or relatives, second only to Ontario at 30%. In sharp contrast, only 11% of Quebec unemployed job searchers checked with friends or relatives. Of all the provinces, Quebec had the highest proportion of job searchers checking directly with employers at over 75%.

Figure 4: Percentage of Unemployed Using Various Job Search Methods
Annual Averages for Canada and Selected Provinces, 1997

	Canada	B.C.	Alberta	Ontario	Québec	Atlantic
Checked with employers directly	68.7	67.1	68.9	64.6	75.3	68.1
Used public employment agency	31.8	30.0	26.0	34.6	27.1	41.4
Looked at job ads	47.3	51.3	53.7	58.0	32.6	40.4
Used private employment agency	5.2	3.9	6.9	8.0	3.1	2.8
Checked with union	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.2	0.9	3.5
Checked with friends or relatives	21.7	26.0	25.8	29.8	10.8	16.6
Placed or answered ads	18.8	22.8	31.1	25.2	7.2	13.9
Used other methods	3.7	4.5	4.9	4.3	2.5	2.9

Atlantic Provinces see biggest rise in the use of job ads as a search method . . . Although the proportion of job seekers using job ads since 1976 has increased in all provinces, B.C. has seen the smallest increase, from 49 per cent to 51 per cent while the Atlantic Provinces have experienced a relatively large increase, from 24 per cent to 40 per cent. As mentioned above, there has been a Canada wide decrease in the use of public employment agencies since 1976, with a relatively large drop in B.C. compared to most other areas of the country, second only to the drop in Quebec.

Figure 5: Job Search Method Undertaken by Unemployed, Selected Provinces



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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	3,958.7	1.4
Canada	30,488.9	1.0
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1997	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	25,039	0.2
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,515	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj) Apr	2,738	-9.0
Merchandise Exports (raw) Apr	1,909	-19.5
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Apr	2,811	1.5
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	May '98	one year ago
BC	110.3	0.3
Canada	108.7	1.1
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Jun '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,041	1.9
Employed - BC	1,849	1.0
Unemployed - BC	192	11.7
		Jun '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	9.4	8.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.4	9.1
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Jul 8/98	July 9/97
Prime Business Rate	6.50	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.55	5.20
- 5 year	6.95	7.00
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Jun 30/98	July 9/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4745	1.3728
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6782	0.7284
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Apr '98	one year ago
BC	612.18	-0.2
Canada	608.94	2.0

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Released this week by BC STATS
- Exports, April 1998

Next week
- Labour Force Statistics, June 1998
- Immigration Highlights, First Quarter, 1998

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